

RAC NOTES

*Arizona Bureau of Land Management
Resource Advisory Council Newsletter
February 2006, Number 16*

Highlights of RAC Meeting and Tour in Safford, AZ, August 23-24, 2005

On August 23rd, a RAC business meeting was convened at the Manor House in Safford. **Frances Werner, RAC Chair, called the meeting to order** and led off the introductions of personnel in attendance. Minutes of the previous RAC meeting were reviewed and approved subject to some changes and corrections.

Then, **Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director**, welcomed the group and gave an **update on legislation, regulations, and statewide issues**. Her report included the following topics:

- **Personnel Update,**
- **Organizational Effectiveness Update,**
- **2005 Fire Season,**
- **Antiquities Centennial,**
- **Resolution Copper Exchange**

Proposal,

- **Resumption of Wild Horse and Burro Sale Authority,**
- **Mining Claim Fee Increase,**
- **Proposed Cost Recovery Fee Changes,**
- **Energy Bill Implications for BLM,**
- **Interior Appropriations Bill,**
- **White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation,**
- **Grazing Rule Changes Supplemental EIS, and**

- New Office Location for Arizona State Office Employees.

The RAC was pleased to hear the great progress on implementing the organizational effectiveness strategy and welcomes the new as well as existing managers who were selected for key positions in the three-tier structure. Also, it was good to hear that BLM and its partners, including the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP), would be featured at the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation. BLM Director Kathleen Clarke will be in Phoenix on August 27th to present awards to the SVPP representatives.

Next, Elaine recognized five out-going RAC members, presenting each with a plaque honoring their service. She thanked them for getting involved in the RAC and dedicating their time over the past three years to BLM issues.

Next, **Cindy Alvarez, Acting BLM Tucson Field Manager**, gave a presentation on **Saginaw Hill Update**. Saginaw Hill is a 540-acre parcel of public land surrounded by private and State land located southwest of Tucson. It contains two abandoned mines with mine wastes that are the subject of an ongoing BLM Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) Removal Action. Cindy discussed the history of the

site and current issues. BLM has met with the local public to present its initial findings of soil and groundwater sampling, to explain the clean up process, and to discuss health risks. To eliminate physical hazards, BLM has filled in open mine shafts and fenced off areas with the highest levels of contamination. Another 290 acres have been closed to public access to provide a safety zone for clean up activities. BLM will continue with ongoing CERCLA efforts and pursue funding to complete the Engineering Evaluation. RAC members familiar with the area shared their perspectives and noted the challenges BLM faces in controlling trespass by recreational users at or near the site.

Next, **RAC member Jan Holder** gave a presentation on the **Gila Watershed Council**. The Council's mission is to improve water quality and condition of the upper Gila watershed, one of ten watersheds in Arizona. It was formed in 1992 by Pete Brawley and has members from federal, state, and local agencies. The Council is staffed with a program manager and part-time bookkeeper. Jan discussed projects accomplished by the Council to reduce soil erosion and water turbidity. The Council has been very successful in garnering grant funding and partnerships. The RAC was impressed with the Council's efforts and believe it can serve as a model for other watershed groups. One RAC member discussed the potential for acquiring state and federal funding from sources such as the Wetland Reserve Program and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQUIP) to improve water quality in the watershed.

During the **Public Comment period**, local rancher Pete Brawley stressed the importance of partnerships, such as the

watershed council, and the need to bring everyone into the process early.

Next, **Mike Taylor, Deputy State Director for Resources**, gave a progress report on the status of **Arizona Land Use Plans**. A handout was distributed which gave a comprehensive status update for all of the plans. The Lake Havasu Draft RMP/EIS will be out in the near future for public comment. The Lake Havasu Field Office has been working closely with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and this has had positive results. An issue dealing with burros at Alamo Lake is being resolved by re-looking the Herd Management Area there. The RAC will be briefed soon on the Draft RMP/EIS for the Agua Fria and Arizona Strip land use plans. Mike discussed the recent briefing to the RAC on the draft Yuma land use plan and how the RAC's input was helpful in moving the process forward. The Ironwood Forest plan is taking additional time in order to conduct more public outreach. The RAC continues to be very interested in the land use planning efforts and appreciates receiving status updates and having opportunities to provide input.

Next, **Bill Brandau, Acting Safford Field Manager**, gave a presentation on the **San Simon Watershed and Tour Highlights**. He discussed the area's natural, cultural, and mineral resources and its significance to grazing and recreation. Major issues include undocumented aliens and drug smugglers, erosion, and maintenance of watershed projects. A long-term goal is completion of the San Simon Ecosystem Management Plan. Bill discussed the area's historical erosion problems and the numerous erosion control structures that have been built over the last 70 years. A big concern is potential for

these structures to be breached. More details will be provided during the next day's RAC tour.

RAC Working Group Reports.

a. **Standards and Guidelines (S&G).** The S&G work group discussed the following items:

- Changes to the grazing regulations. Bill Coulloudon provided a handout and summarized the key rule changes. The changes are considered fine-tuning adjustments that will provide more flexibility and make corrections based on 10 years of experience with the 1995 regulations. The new regulations make no changes in the rangeland health standards and guidelines that were developed by the RAC.
- Ongoing rangeland monitoring on Las Cienegas NCA by the Nature Conservancy. The work group has some reservations about the change in protocol and methodology being used. The group feels that monitoring procedures should be uniform and consistent to the extent possible. Also, it was felt that while outside organizations may monitor, evaluate, and make recommendations, BLM should be in charge and apply professional judgement in evaluating the data and making appropriate decisions on grazing. The BLM range conservation personnel need to be intimately involved too.
- The outgoing Chair of the S&G Work Group, Lamar Smith, was recognized by RAC Chair Frances Werner for his outstanding contributions over the years. To ensure Lamar had a memento of his RAC experience, she presented him with a tee shirt featuring a picture of RAC member Bill Branan and his burro.

b. **Public Relations.** The draft August 2005 RAC Notes newsletter was distributed

to the RAC members for review. The Chair stated that the newsletter was ready for publication and any changes should be submitted as soon as possible. The finalized newsletter will be posted to the BLM web site.

c. **Recreation and Tourism.** The work group discussed the following topics:

- Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs). The work group received feedback from those members who attended a listening meeting on RRACs. Legislation directs agencies to establish Recreation RACs to provide advice and recommendations on recreation fee sites and fee changes. Several options were discussed at the listening meeting on how to structure the RRACs.
- Preliminary Draft of Recreation in BLM. The work group reviewed and discussed a draft document developed by two of the work group members. Intent is to develop a document that could be used to promote recreation and tourism on BLM lands and the role of gateway communities that support visitor services. The draft provides an overview of recreational opportunities and destinations on BLM lands along with a listing of BLM field offices and gateway communities. Mike Taylor will get this on the table for State Leadership Team discussion. The RAC is prepared to help once the Arizona BLM has decided on a course of action.
- Juan Bautista de Anza Trail. The group discussed the significance of the Anza Trail and the opportunities for BLM to interpret and promote the trail in partnership with the National Park Service and Arizona State Parks. BLM will report back on its efforts regarding the Anza Trail at a future RAC meeting.

d. **Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B).** Mike Taylor briefed the work group on status of the WH&B program. Field offices are estimating that all Herd Management Areas (HMAs) are at Appropriate Management Level (AML). Goal is to achieve AMLs by 2005. The current focus is to census all 6 HMAs to determine the current wild burro population and confirm that Arizona is indeed at AML. Mike also discussed resumption of the Burns Amendment sales in Arizona. New wording has been added to strengthen Bill of Sale agreements and to establish criminal penalties for buyers who mislead the government about transfer of horses to another entity for slaughter.

e. **Land Use Planning and Tenure.** The Chair, Glen Collins, provided a summary of the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership (MGCP) report. The report reflects results of a collaborative, community based planning effort that started in September, 2001, in Florence. The report summarizes the group's evaluation of over 900 miles of roads and trails in the project area. Three route alternatives were identified, ranging from "access" to "environmental". The report highlights the high recreational values of the area and the need to retain both Federal and State lands as open space and available for public recreation, military training, ranching, mining, and conservation purposes. The report has been provided to the affected land agencies for consideration in preparing their land use plans and in developing a coordinated access route system for the area. A briefing to the agencies is planned for the October timeframe. The RAC was impressed with the substantial work done by this group and supports the report's conclusions and recommendations. This report provides a solid foundation for BLM's use in

preparation of the upcoming land use plan for the Tucson Field Office.

f. **OHV.** The Chair, Sandee McCullen, summarized the work group's discussions about developing OHV guidelines. It was agreed that the guidelines should be tied to rangeland health standards as well as the national BLM OHV strategy document. The work group will begin collecting copies of OHV guidelines developed by other western states for consideration.

It was noted during discussion of the **Field Manager Reports** that the stream gage at Charleston Bridge on the San Pedro River registered zero flow in July. This was the first recorded occurrence in 75 years. One RAC member distributed copies of several newspaper articles about impacts of growth to the San Pedro River, the Section 321 report on water management in the upper San Pedro basin, and an initiative to establish an Active Management Area (AMA) for the Sierra Vista sub-watershed. Questions were raised about status of BLM's efforts to assert federal reserved water rights for the San Pedro river. It was agreed that this topic will be addressed at the next RAC meeting

On August 24th, the RAC participated in a **tour of the San Simon valley and watershed**. During the tour, the RAC was briefed on the area's historical erosion problems and watershed restoration efforts accomplished over the years. At the San Simon Barrier Structure, the RAC was briefed on the purpose and cost of the structure. Within the first two years, the channel silted in to the level of the spillway (17 feet). This dam serves to reduce peak flows and protect both the town of Solomonville and nearby farmland. The RAC also visited a significant fossil site in

the area of the 111 Ranch. The Safford BLM office has partnered with other agencies to inventory, collect, and curate the fossils. Next, the RAC viewed the Goat Well Drop Structure which was built in 1940 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Despite the highly erosive soil conditions, it has effectively stopped head cutting up the Slick Rock floodplain. The RAC then visited a “must stop” point on the tour, specifically the Hot Well Dunes Recreation Area. This highly popular destination provides a great opportunity for OHV enthusiasts and includes two hot tubs, ten developed campsites, and a pond and wildlife viewing area. From there, the RAC visited the Pete Brawley Project to view efforts by a private landowner to control erosion. After completion of the tour, the RAC had a much better appreciation of the challenges faced by BLM in rehabilitating the watershed and maintaining its aging erosion control structures.

Highlights of RAC Meeting in Phoenix, AZ, December 6, 2005

On December 6th, a RAC business meeting was convened at the new location of the Arizona State Office at One Central Avenue in Phoenix, AZ. **Frances Werner, RAC Chair, called the meeting to order** and led off the introductions of personnel in attendance. She welcomed two new RAC members: Greenlee County Supervisor Richard Lunt from Duncan, AZ, representing county government, and Larry Howery, from Tucson, AZ, representing academia.

The next item of RAC business was the annual election of officers. Frances Werner was re-elected to serve as Chair, and Steve Saway was elected to serve as Vice-

Chair. Also, minutes from the previous RAC meeting were reviewed and approved after some changes.

Carl Roundtree, BLM Associate State Director, welcomed the group and gave an **update on legislation, regulations, and statewide issues**. His report included the following topics:

- **Personnel Update,**
- **Dos Pobres Record of Decision,**
- **Kane and Two Mile Ranch Acquisition,**
- **Arizona BLM Web Site Connection,**
- **National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) Assessment, and**
- **Energy Act Implications for BLM.**

There was some discussion of the NLCS report card. Written from the perspectives of various environmental groups, it takes a generally critical view of the condition and stewardship of the BLM managed NLCS units. This is mainly attributed to inadequate funding and staffing. The RAC believes the assessment is narrowly drawn and does not fully recognize the many accomplishments in the NLCS since its creation about five years ago. Also, considering the short history of the NLCS, it would be pre-mature to expect major resource management decisions until the on-going land use plans for these NLCS units are fully coordinated with the public and approved.

Next, **Bill Childress, San Pedro Project Manager**, gave an update on **status of the San Pedro Water Rights**. As background, the legislation that established the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) directed BLM to file a claim for the federal reserved water rights for the San Pedro. This has been a long process; however, BLM has completed its analysis and the package is

currently with the Department of Justice for review. Once approved, the claim will be filed with the Arizona Department of Water Resources and the appropriate court for adjudication. Bill also discussed the report required by Section 321 of the Defense Authorization Act of 2004. Goal is to bring the basin into a sustainable yield basis by 2011. The initial report was submitted in July, 2005. As this subject has been of major interest to the RAC, there was considerable discussion of the San Pedro's health and the ability of the Upper San Pedro Partnership to achieve sustainable yield. It was noted that during a recent field trip to the San Pedro, a University of Arizona water law expert expressed concern that the river cannot be saved unless growth is managed in the sub-watershed (copy of the newspaper article about the field trip was distributed to RAC members). A proposal by a developer in Sierra Vista to build 8500 homes on 2000 acres is pending review and approval. RAC members expressed concern over lack of a growth management strategy by local community officials, and that BLM must be the ultimate leader to protect the San Pedro. The RAC believes the federal reserved water rights claim is very important and will continue to stay abreast of this issue.

Next, **Jim Maynard of the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association**, gave a presentation on **Rangeland Inventory and Monitoring**. Jim discussed the collaborative effort by the Forest Service, BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Arizona, Arizona Cattle Growers' Association, Arizona State Land Department, and Arizona Conservation Districts to standardize methodology for obtaining and interpreting utilization data. Purpose is to bring the best science and improved consistency across

agencies to the use of forage utilization data as a rangeland management tool. The University of Arizona has published a paper which is available on-line. Jim further discussed the concepts of key areas, monitoring, and utilization guidelines, and explained the factors that must be considered when obtaining and interpreting utilization data. Bill Coulloudon also spoke about how utilization and rangeland trend data are used by BLM. The RAC was pleased to see the progress and collaboration in developing more consistent and science-based methodology for this important rangeland management tool.

Next, **Julie Decker, BLM Lands, Recreation, and Planning Group Leader**, gave an update on status of **Arizona Land Use Plans**. A handout was distributed which gave a comprehensive status update for all of the plans. The BLM managers for Lake Havasu, Phoenix, and Arizona Strip Districts each gave a brief update of their planning efforts and meetings with local communities. In addition, Teri Raml, Phoenix District Manager, discussed use of temporary student employees to assist with the content analysis effort. These students were also involved in interviewing members of the public to gather their opinions and views on BLM's planning process for the Agua Fria/Bradshaw plans. The students recorded these interviews on video which was shown to the RAC. The RAC was impressed with the outstanding contributions of these students and the generally positive feedback from members of the public involved in the interviews.

The **Public Comment period** was opened and no comments were received.

It was noted during discussion of the **Field Manager Reports** that the Safford Field Office had hosted fossil specialists

from across the country to tour its nationally known paleontological sites. The RAC appreciates the opportunity it was provided during the Safford BLM field trip in August to learn about these important sites.

RAC Working Group Reports.

a. **Land Use Planning and Tenure.** The Chair provided a summary of the meeting, hosted by Director Zielinski, with Middle Gila Conservation Partnership (MGCP) agencies in October. Based on experience derived from the MGCP effort as well as from other ongoing land use planning efforts, the Chair expressed the need for BLM to elevate the significance and role of BLM lands for sustaining public recreation. Historically, BLM views public lands from the perspective of conservation and natural resource protection. Though valid, this perspective does not fully recognize the social values of public lands, i.e., the growing need for open spaces and “natural resource enjoyment areas” that are highly valued by the public. This is arguably the major use and mission of BLM lands in Arizona. This theme was well received by the RAC and will be further discussed at a future RAC meeting.

b. **Public Relations.** The Chair plans to prepare the next RAC Notes newsletter in February, 2006. It will be distributed to the RAC members for review before publication. The Chair solicited any input from RAC members on items they would like to include in the newsletter.

c. **Recreation and Tourism.** The Chair reported on the following topics:

- Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs). Don Applegate provided the work group an update. The issue is still under review at the national

BLM/Forest Service level on how to structure the RRACs. It appears likely that existing RACs where possible will be used to perform the duties of the RRACs.

- Partnerships and Gateway Communities. The Chair discussed how BLM lands can support tourism and gave an example of a group that visited Sears Point. The value of partnerships with gateway communities was emphasized.

- Recreation and Tourism Document. The BLM is preparing a new national policy using “benefits based management”. The Arizona BLM strategy for recreation and tourism will incorporate the national policy once that is distributed.

d. Standards and Guidelines (S&G).

Pending designation of a work group Chair, Bill Coulloudon reported on the following topics that were discussed by the work group:

- Status of proposed grazing regulations. A supplemental EIS is being prepared by BLM. Expect the record of decision and final rule to be published after first of the year.

- Status of land health evaluations.

- Rangeland Resource Teams (RRTs).

Discussed some issues dealing with RRTs and the need to revitalize some of the RRTs.

The work group would like the District Managers to give a status report on the state of their RRTs at the next RAC meeting.

e. **Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B).** The RAC received an update from Al Burch who discussed the following topics:

- Arizona WH&B Program Summary.

This fiscal year BLM will census the remaining four HMAs to verify populations and

confirm whether Arizona is indeed at AML.

- A recent adoption event at the Kingman Corrals resulted in 25 adoptions.

- After BLM strengthened language in the Bill of Sale agreements, sales of horses have decreased.

- The National Wild Horse and Burro Foundation has recently reorganized. Its focus is now on the Eastern States Pilot Adoption Program and a Pilot Volunteer Project in California.

f. **Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV).** The Chair reported on the following topics:

- The MGCP report has been distributed.
- Moto Trax project is moving forward.

Leah Benson would like to make a presentation to the RAC.

- The draft OHV guidelines will be available for review at the next RAC meeting. The work group had a productive discussion of how to move forward on this. Copies of OHV guidelines from other western states were distributed to the work group members for consideration. One member agreed to develop a first cut draft of the guidelines and link them to the Arizona rangeland health standards and the national BLM OHV strategy.

RAC Membership

Following is the list of *newly-appointed, **reappointed and current RAC members, the category they represent, and their place of residence. Each member's terms are for 3-years, and are staggered.

Commodity Category (5 members)

Ty Kelly, Grazing, Wickenburg, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Lee Aitken, Transportation/
ROW, Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Sandra McCullen, Off-Road Vehicle
Use, Mesa, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Carolyn Loder, Energy/Minerals, Tempe,
AZ - Term Ending 9/07

**Stephen Saway, Off-Road Vehicle
Use, Sierra Vista, AZ - Term Ending 9/08

Non-Commodity Category (5 members)

**Glendon Collins, Dispersed
Recreation, Phoenix, AZ - Term Ending
9/08

William Branan, Environmental, Elgin,
AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Jan Holder, Dispersed Recreation,
Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Tina Clark, Historical/Archaeology,
Yuma, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

**Frances Werner, Dispersed Recreation,
Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/08

Local Area Interests (5 members)

*Richard Lunt, Elected Official, Duncan,
AZ - Term Ending 9/08

Lorraine Eiler, Native American Tribes,
Glendale, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

*Larry Howery, Academia, Tucson, AZ -
Term Ending 9/08

Jay Adkins, Public-At-Large, Goodyear,
AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Peggy Titus, Public-At-Large, Mayer,
AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Robert Broscheid is the Governor's
representative to the RAC. Frances Werner
is chair for the Arizona RAC.

For Further Information

If you have any questions about the RAC, contact Deborah Stevens, BLM Public Affairs Specialist, at the BLM Arizona State Office, One North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85004, or call 602-417-9215. For the latest approved RAC Meeting Minutes,

check BLM's External Home Page @
www.az.blm.gov

About RAC Notes

RAC Notes is published periodically by the RAC Public Relations Working Group to provide the public with information related to current RAC activities and public land issues. To get on the mailing list, please contact Deborah Stevens at (602) 417-9215 or e-mail to Deborah_Stevens@blm.gov.

The RAC Notes is also posted on the BLM Home Page @ www.az.blm.gov under the News/Resource Advisory Council button.

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